

AMSTERDAM

# Liberty ARC delivering services in Montgomery, Sch'dy counties

## Two Arc of New York chapters merged this month

BY ASHLEY ONYON

The Arc of New York chapters in Montgomery and Schenectady counties recently merged under the name Liberty ARC.

"The organization has had a strategic plan goal to expand our services and our reach for a number of years and we were really looking for the right partner to do that with," said Jennifer Saunders, CEO of Liberty ARC, on Friday.

The planned retirement of former Schenectady ARC CEO Kirk Lewis last year created an opportunity for the neighboring chapters to explore possible unification and plan out the process over the last 10 months. The merger became official on May 1.

Bringing the agencies together will allow Liberty ARC to expand programs and services supporting individuals with disabilities in the two counties, while providing the

more substantial organization a layer of protection and flexibility in the future.

"It's going to allow us to ensure quality services during financially challenging times," Saunders said. "We'll have the ability to absorb financial risk and changes in needs of individuals more easily with a larger size."

The combined agency now has over 1,100 full- and part-time staff members and provides services to over 720 people with disabilities.

Offices are being maintained in both Montgomery and Schenectady counties. There have been no staffing reductions from the merger, which has created opportunities for some expanded roles or promotions.

"We went through thoughtfully and looked at each program and department and tried to find the best practice for each one to be able to merge the two together," Saunders said. "We are aggressively re-

cruiting because we would like to grow our employee base."

Liberty ARC recently also appointed seven new members to the Board of Directors. Karen Bona, Arthur Breault, John Bresonis, Holly J. Gray, Tammy Krisher and Sarah Wilson-Sparrow each previously served on the board at Schenectady ARC. Brandon Waylett is joining the board after previously chairing the family support services committee at Liberty ARC.

"They're bringing a wonderful experience in the fields of intellectual and developmental disabilities, supported care, health care, finances and business ownership," Saunders said. "We look forward to their contributions to the agency as we provide quality supports and services to people with disabilities in Montgomery and Schenectady counties."

While there have been structural changes within the organization, Saunders said there

haven't been any changes to services in either county at this stage with programs expected to soon be expanded into each county alongside other improvements.

"At this point, it's been pretty much a name change," Saunders said. "People are still getting to work with their preferred staff, seeing familiar faces. Because we have such similar cultures and missions, it's really been fairly seamless for families and people we're supporting."

Self-directed services and a horticulture program previously only offered in Schenectady County will soon make their way to Montgomery County. And an art program popular in Montgomery County will likewise be extended into Schenectady County.

In the coming months, Saunders said capital improvements are planned to residential program homes in Schenectady County. Work will largely involve updates to kitchen and bathrooms addressing acces-



PHOTO PROVIDED

Photo courtesy of Liberty ARC.

sibility to ensure residents can safely remain in their homes as they age.

"We're leveraging the experience and expertise of our staff members to provide the very best for the people in our programs today and in the decades ahead," Saunders said. "We know that the heart of this unification is a mutual respect

for people with disabilities and a desire to support each person's hopes, dreams, and ambitions so that everyone can live a quality of life that each person values."

Reach Ashley Onyon at [aonyon@dailygazette.net](mailto:aonyon@dailygazette.net) or @AshleyOnyon on X.

COPAKE

# Vehicular manslaughter charged in crash that killed Mechanicville motorcyclist

BY TIFFANY GREENWALDT-SIMON

A Copake man drove drunk Saturday and struck a motorcyclist from Saratoga County, killing the motorcyclist, Columbia County Sheriff's officials said.

Killed in the crash was Christopher Simmons, 29, of Mechanicville, officials said.

The Copake man, identified as Alan Ingraham, 75, was charged with second-degree vehicular manslaughter, a felony, among other charges, officials said.

Sheriff's deputies determined that Ingraham's blood alcohol content was two times over the state's legal limit of .08.

The crash occurred at around 9:30 p.m. Saturday at the intersection of Route 23 and County Route 11A in the town of Copake, officials said.

A 2023 Ford F150 truck being driven by Ingraham and a 1991 Honda motorcycle driven by Simmons collided at the intersection, officials said.

Ingraham was traveling west on Route 23 and attempted to make a left turn onto Route 11A. Simmons was travelling east, and Ingraham failed to yield to his motorcycle.

Simmons was ejected from his motorcycle after he hit Ingraham's truck. He was treated at the scene by Community Rescue Squad and then transferred to Columbia Memorial Health, where he was later pronounced dead.

Ingraham was not hurt in the crash. A passenger in his truck, identified as Rosemary Ingraham, was taken to Columbia Memorial Health for minor injuries.

Along with vehicular manslaughter, Ingraham was charged with driving while intoxicated, a misdemeanor. He was also ticketed for failure to keep right and failure to yield to the right of way.

He was arraigned in Claverack Town Court on Sunday, and

ordered held on \$1,000 cash bail or \$2,000 bond.

Ingraham is set to appear in Copake Town Court again on June 24 at 5 p.m.

An autopsy was conducted on Simmons Tuesday morning, and the results are pending. The investigation into the crash is ongoing, police said.

The Craryville Fire Department and New York State Police assisted at the scene of the crash, and Route 23 remained closed for roughly three hours while the investigation was taking place.

The prison sentence for a class D felony is two to seven years, according to New York Penal Law.

Saturday's Copake crash was one of two where motorcyclists were killed over the weekend. A Cairo motorcyclist was killed Sunday evening in a single-vehicle crash on Route 23 in Greene County, state police said.



PHOTO PROVIDED

## NYS Senate Woman of Distinction

State Sen. James Tedisco, R-, C-Ballston Lake, stands with retired U.S. Navy nurse, Lt. Helene Wallingford of Malta, honored as one of the New York State Senate Woman of Distinction honorees on May 14 at the state Capitol in Albany.

SCHENECTADY

# Red Cross assists 23 residents displaced by Jerry Street fire

BY TED REMSNYDER

Schenectady firefighters quelled a Tuesday morning blaze at 155C Jerry St., with 23 displaced residents assisted on the scene by the Red Cross.

Firefighters responded to a fire at the MacGathan Townhouses complex at approximately 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, with the fire located on the second floor of the four-apartment dwelling.

The fire was extinguished in approximately 45 minutes and no one was injured as a result of the incident.

"On arrival, crews found heavy fire on the second floor," Schenectady Fire Chief Donald Mareno said on Tuesday. "Crews had to evacuate numerous people from the building, some who were resisting to

leave. Everyone was able to get out safely."

The Northeastern New York Chapter of the American Red Cross provided assistance to 23 residents at the scene, including 17 adults and six children who are between the ages of 3-15.

The organization provided

emergency aid to the residents, with the agency's staff to remain on site in the coming days to provide aid to the affected residents.

Contact Ted Remsnyder at [tremnsnyder@dailygazette.net](mailto:tremnsnyder@dailygazette.net). Follow him on X at @TedRemsnyder.

TOWN OF JOHNSTOWN

# Man, girl injured in ATV incident

BY TYLER A. McNEIL

A man and small child were injured in an ATV incident in the town of Johnstown on Sunday, Fulton County Sheriff Richard Giardino said.

Authorities were called to the scene around 12:30 p.m. near the corner of state Route 29 and Maloney Road after the two were ejected from an ATV.

"Well, they came off [their] property onto Route 29 and apparently, it got stuck, accel-

erated and looked like it rolled over," Giardino said. "And that's how they got ejected."

The "shaken up" 6-year-old girl was transported to Nathan Littauer Hospital for closer examination. The man, conscious and alert at the scene, was airlifted to Albany Medical Center for treatment.

Giardino in a phone interview said that he wasn't in the office and didn't have information on the man's age offhand.

His name has been withheld.

The incident remained under investigation.

Multiple individuals stood by and helped out first responders on the scene, according to the sheriff.

"We want to say thank you to those who stuck around and gave us information," Giardino said.

A portion of the road was blocked off for about an hour that afternoon, the sheriff reported.

# Melinda French Gates to donate \$1B over next 2 years in support of women's rights

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melinda French Gates says she will be donating \$1 billion over the next two years to individuals and organizations working on behalf of women and families globally, including on reproductive rights in the United States.

It's the second billion-dollar commitment French Gates has personally made in the past five years.

In 2019, she pledged over ten years to expand women's power and influence.

Earlier this month, French Gates announced she would step down from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and vowed to focus on women and families.

As a part of leaving the Gates Foundation, French Gates received \$12 billion from Bill

Gates for her philanthropy going forward.

French Gates, one of the biggest philanthropic supporters of gender equity in the U.S., said Tuesday in a guest essay for The New York Times that she's been frustrated over the years by people who say it's not

the right time to talk about gender equality.

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